

PART 8

EIA PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION / SCREENING PROCEDURE

Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) – Part 10

PA ref.: PT8 MH 187

Date of Display: 16/ 01 / 2025

(*to be completed and attached to file on date of display)

Proposing Department: Rural Regeneration

Responsible Officer: Pat Shore (TRO/SEO)

Planning Case Officer: Michael McKenna (Assistant Planner)

Proposed Development: Lough Bracken Enhancement Plan

Site Location: Lough Bracken, Drumconrath, Co. Meath

1. (a) Is the development of a type set out in Part 1 of Schedule 5:

No

(b) If 'Yes', specify which Class and notify Responsible Officer of requirement to proceed to Article 117 scoping and/or Section 175 application to An Bord Pleanála, as necessary:

N/A

2. (a) Is the development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 5:

No

(b) If 'Yes', specify which Class and notify Responsible Officer of requirement to proceed to Article 117 scoping and/or Section 175 application to An Bord Pleanála, as necessary:

N/A

3. (a) Is the development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 5 which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in respect to the relevant class of development:

Yes

(b) If 'Yes', specify which Class and proceed to Question 4:

Sub-threshold Development – Preliminary Examination (Step 1)

4. Provide a preliminary examination of the proposed development in accordance with Article 120(1)(a) referencing its nature, size and location:

Planning permission is being sought by MCC for the enhancement of an existing recreational area covering an area of approximately 26 ha (54 acres) and includes Lough Bracken, adjacent forestry land and the access road. The existing site facilities including angling stands, car park, boardwalk and signage, will be retained where appropriate.

The aim of the Proposed Development is to improve the function of the site as an amenity whilst also serving to improve, maintain and protect water quality conditions of the lake itself. The Proposed Development will include the following:

- **Angling Stands** - To improve the usability and sustainability of Lough Bracken for anglers, the total number and distribution of angling stands is to be increased to eight around the lake shoreline. An accessible angling stand is also proposed on the north-western shore of the lake.
- **Walking Tracks** - Walking tracks have been designed based on the multifaceted use of the lake circulation patterns which allow for the management of recreational users, anglers, families and people of all abilities. All walking track loops are to be clearly mapped at the car park showing site amenities along each route. Some forestry trees will be removed in some areas to facilitate woodland boardwalks and trails to be created, and this will also provide space and opportunities for micro sites and ecological enhancement works.
- **Bird Hides** - Bird hides are proposed along the lake's western shore approximately 300 m from the car park. This will be an all-access facility.
- **Fencing** - Treated posts and rail fences are to be constructed along the lake's southern and eastern shoreline. These will be placed at a contour at least 600 cm above the high-water level of the lake.
- **Picnic and Amenity Areas** - Adjacent to the existing car park, the area of unused amenity grassland is proposed as a picnic area with a toilet and changing room facility. Proposed is a universal access compost toilet. The toilet block could be fitted with a solar panel roof to provide hot water for hand washing and the block will be connected by boardwalk to the rest of the universal access areas. A series of interlinking picnic areas are to be created within the amenity area beside the car park.
- **Playground** - The current amenity grassland will also provide space for a universal access children's playground. Nature-based play structures will include slides, swings and a climbable castle structure.
- **Carpark, Cycling and Signage** - The car park is approximately 0.1 hectares of tarmac with kerbing surrounding the edges. The western edge of the car park is bounded by a small area of amenity grassland that appears to be unmanaged. This is fringed to the west by semi-mature and mature trees. The car park was seen to be in good condition overall. The surface is largely intact and suitable for use. It is proposed that a picnic / resting furniture is installed adjacent to the car park. The facilities should include a secure bicycle-parking rack. Signage is proposed to be installed to inform a range of visitors at Lough Bracken. A key component of the signage is environmental information. This should highlight the importance of clean water at Lough Bracken and the lake's significance for water supply.
- **Tree Planting** - Clearance of non-native commercial conifers around the car park and around the lake's eastern shoreline will provide opportunities for ecological enhancement, particularly tree

planting.

· **Site Access** - improvement of existing site access and junction between the LT34042 access lane and local road L34040 (Nobber Road).

Preliminary Conclusion

there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, and an EIA is not required [Article 120(1)(b)(i)]

there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and the information specified in Schedule 7A is required for the purposes of a screening determination [Article 120(1)(b)(ii) – proceed to Q. 5] ¹

there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and an EIAR is required in respect of the development [Article 120(1)(b)(iii)] ²

Specify reason(s)

Signatures

1.  06/ 01 / 2025
Pat Shore (SEO)

2.  06 / 01 / 2025
Dara McGowan (Director of Services)

¹ Notify Responsible Officer of requirement to provide Schedule 7A information.

² Notify Responsible

³ Officer of requirement to provide an EIAR and proceed to Article 117 scoping and/or Section 175 application to An Bord Pleanála.

Sub-threshold Development – Screening Determination (Step 2)

5. Provide a screening determination of the proposed development in accordance with Article 120(1B) with reference to the criteria listed in Schedule 7 and the information submitted pursuant to Schedule 7A, where applicable:

See attached determination sheet

Screening Determination

- there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and an EIA is not required [Article 120(1B)(i)]
- there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and an EIAR is required in respect of the development [Article 120(1B)(ii)]¹

Specify reason(s)

Planning permission is being sought by MCC for the enhancement of an existing recreational area covering an area of approximately 26 ha (54 acres) and includes Lough Bracken, adjacent forestry land and the access road. The existing site facilities including angling stands, car park, boardwalk and signage, will be retained where appropriate.

The aim of the Proposed Development is to improve the function of the site as an amenity whilst also serving to improve, maintain and protect water quality conditions of the lake itself. The Proposed Development will include the following:

- **Angling Stands** - To improve the usability and sustainability of Lough bracken for anglers, the total number and distribution of angling stands is to be increased to eight around the lake shoreline. An accessible angling stan is also proposed on the north-western shore of the lake.
- **Walking Tracks** - Walking tracks have been designed based on the multifaceted use of the lake circulation patterns which allow for the management of recreational users, anglers, families and people of all abilities. All walking track loops are to be clearly mapped at the car park showing site amenities along each route. Some forestry trees will be removed in some areas to facilitate woodland boardwalks and trails to be created, and this will also provide space and opportunities for micro sites and ecological enhancement works.
- **Bird Hides** - Bird hides are proposed along the lake's western shore approximately 300 m from the car park. This will be an all-access facility.

¹ Notify Responsible Officer of requirement to provide an EIAR and proceed to Article 117 scoping and/or Section 175 application to An Bord Pleanála.

- **Fencing** - Treated posts and rail fences are to be constructed along the lake's southern and eastern shoreline. These will be placed at a contour at least 600 cm above the high-water level of the lake.
- **Picnic and Amenity Areas** - Adjacent to the existing car park, the area of unused amenity grassland is proposed as a picnic area with a toilet and changing room facility. Proposed is a universal access compost toilet. The toilet block could be fitted with a solar panel roof to provide hot water for hand washing and the block will be connected by boardwalk to the rest of the universal access areas. A series of interlinking picnic areas are to be created within the amenity area beside the car park.
- **Playground** - The current amenity grassland will also provide space for a universal access children's playground. Nature-based play structures will include slides, swings and a climbable castle structure.
- **Carpark, Cycling and Signage** - The car park is approximately 0.1 hectares of tarmac with kerbing surrounding the edges. The western edge of the car park is bounded by a small area of amenity grassland that appears to be unmanaged. This is fringed to the west by semi-mature and mature trees. The car park was seen to be in good condition overall. The surface is largely intact and suitable for use. It is proposed that a picnic / resting furniture is installed adjacent to the car park. The facilities should include a secure bicycle-parking rack. Signage is proposed to be installed to inform a range of visitors at Lough Bracken. A key component of the signage is environmental information. This should highlight the importance of clean water at Lough Bracken and the lake's significance for water supply.
- **Tree Planting** - Clearance of non-native commercial conifers around the car park and around the lake's eastern shoreline will provide opportunities for ecological enhancement, particularly tree planting.
- **Site Access** - improvement of existing site access and junction between the LT34042 access lane and local road L34040 (Nobber Road).

Signatures

Dated

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------|
| 1. | 
Pat Shore (SEO) | 06 /01/ 2025 |
| 2. | 
Dara McGowan (Director Of Services) | 06/01/2025 |

Sub-threshold Development – Screening Determination Sheet

1. Characteristics of Proposed Development

The characteristics of development must be considered having regard, in particular, to:

(a)	the size and design of the whole of the proposed development:	Access and junction improvement works, upgrade/regularise car parking, picnic and seating facilities, changing room facilities, widen existing walking route/tracks, resurface existing single lane forestry track, install new tracks with boardwalk facilities
(b)	cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment:	No individual or accumulative affects
(c)	the nature of any associated demolition works:	No demolition works

(d)	the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity:	N/A
(e)	the production of waste:	N/A
(f)	pollution and nuisances:	N/A
(g)	the risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge:	N/A
(h)	the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution):	N/A

2. Location of Proposed Development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, having regard, in particular, to:

(a)	the existing and approved land use:	Open Space in forestry lands and adjacent to a Lake and Agricultural lands
(b)	the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground:	Large open green space with existing unofficial recreational / leisure walking paths/loops
(c)	the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:	
	(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths:	N/A
	(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment:	N/A
	(iii) mountain and forest areas:	N/A
	(iv) nature reserves and parks:	N/A
	(v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive:	N/A

	<p>(vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>(vii) densely populated areas:</p>	<p>Rural countryside</p>
	<p>(viii) landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance:</p>	<p>Adjacent to National Monument (Mottle & Bailey) Ref: ME006-027 (NM No 543)</p>

3. Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, and having regard in particular to:

(a)	the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected):	Total works include for approx. 1km of walking trails, including works to existing access track/roads i.e. resurfacing etc. also included is regularising / resurfacing of and formalise of existing parking arrangements. Viewing areas, a jetty's and fishing stands are also included.
(b)	the nature of the impact:	Minimal
(c)	the transboundary nature of the impact:	None/ Minimal
(d)	the intensity and complexity of the impact:	Minimal
(e)	the probability of the impact:	Low
(f)	the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact:	Proposal will have minimal impact. It will blend in with its green surrounds and due to its low impacted,

(g)	<p>the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment:</p>	<p>No accumulative effects</p>
(h)	<p>the possibility of effectively reducing the impact:</p>	<p>Proposing to re-use existing fishing stands, etc. also developing existing unofficial routes / trails to minimise disturbance</p>



**Meath County Council
Appropriate Assessment
Determination**

From: Pat Shore (on behalf of the Rural Development Section of Meath County Council)

File Reference: PT8/ MH187

Description of Development: The plan outlines a proposal for future development of the Lough Bracken that will bring together the results of the baseline studies, ecological assessments and stakeholder consultation. An overview of the main details of the plan are:

- Angling Stands - To improve the usability and sustainability of Lough bracken for anglers, the total number and distribution of angling stands is to be increased to eight around the lake shoreline;
- Walking Tracks - Walking tracks have been designed based on the multifaceted use of the lake circulation patterns which allow for the management of recreational users, anglers, families and people of all abilities;
- Child-safe swimming area - A child safe swimming area is proposed for the western shoreline along the universal access walking trail. This floating pier will create an enclosure/edge at shallow depths to allow children ease of access and to ensure it is as safe as possible;
- Bird Hides – installation of bird hides;
- Fencing - Treated posts and rail fences are to be constructed along the lake's southern and eastern shoreline. These will be placed at a contour at least 600cm above the high-water level of the lake;
- Picnic and Amenity areas - Adjacent to the existing car park, the area of unused amenity grassland is proposed as a picnic area with a toilet and changing room facility. Proposed is a universal access compost toilet;
- Carpark, cycling and signage - The car park is approximately 0.1 hectares of tarmac with kerbing surrounding the edges. The western edge of the car park is bounded by a small area of amenity grassland that appears to be unmanaged. This is fringed to the west by semi-mature and mature trees. The car park was seen to be in good condition overall. The surface is largely intact and suitable for use. The facilities should include a secure bicycle-parking rack. Signage is proposed to be installed to inform a range of visitors at Lough Bracken;
- Playground - The current amenity grassland will also provide space for a universal access children's playground. Nature-based play structures will include slides, swings and a climbable castle structure;

- Tree planting - Clearance of non-native commercial conifers around the car park and around the lake's eastern shoreline will provide opportunities for ecological enhancement, particularly tree planting. Opportunities exist for planting oaks along with other natives including Birch, Rowan and Holly.

Location: Lough Bracken, Drumconrath, Co. Meath

AA Preliminary Examination Determination:

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment was carried out by Fers – Forestry, Environmental Research and Service Ltd and their screening conclusion states that;

“According to the guidance published by the NPWS (DoEHLG, 2009), Screening for Appropriate Assessment can either identify that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is not required where:

- (1) A project/proposal is directly related to the management of the site; or
- (2) There is no potential for significant impacts affecting the Natura 2000 network

Where the screening process identifies that significant impacts are certain, likely or uncertain the project must either proceed to Stage II Appropriate Assessment or be rejected.

The potential impacts that could arise from the proposed Lough Bracken enhancement feasibility study and Landscape Master Plan have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially impact upon the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. On the basis of the findings of this Screening for Appropriate Assessment, it is concluded that the proposed plan:

- (1) Is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site and
- (2) Does not have the potential to have significant negative impacts on the Natura 2000 network.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information and the potential for significant effects on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and applying the Precautionary Principle, it is, in the professional opinion of the author of this report, possible to exclude (on the basis of objective information and in the absence of specific prescribed precautionary/mitigation measures) that the proposed plan individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have any significant potential to have negative impacts on the Natura 2000 network.

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement is not required in this instance”.

Accordingly, having carried out the Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening, the competent authority may determine that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the proposed site investigation works is not required as it can be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, that the proposed works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European site.

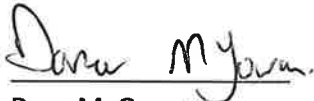
Having regard to Fers screening report, it is considered that Meath County Council can determine that the proposed development will not affect the integrity of any designated site.

The assessment as reported is adopted as the determination of Meath County Council



Pat Shore
Senior Executive Officer
Meath County Council

Date: 06 /01/2025



Dara McGowan
Director of Services
Meath County Council

Date: 06 /01/2025